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'TIS ALL FOR THE BEST.

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'TIS ALL FOR THE BEST.

"IT is all for the best," said Mrs. Simpson, when ever any misfortune befel her. She had got such an habit of vindicating Providence, that, instead of weeping and wailing under the most trying dispensations, her chief care was to convince herself and others, that however great might be her sufferings, and however little they could be accounted for at present, yet that the Judge of all the earth could not but do right. The honour of God was dearer to her than her own credit, and her chief desire was to turn all events to his glory. Though she was the daughter of a clergyman, and the widow of a genteel tradesman, she had been reduced to accept of a room in an alms-house. Instead of repining at the change; instead of dwelling on her former gentility, and saying: "How handsomely she had lived once; and how hard it was to be reduced; and she little thought ever to end her days in an alms house;" which is the common language of those who were never so well off before; she was thankful that such an asylum was provided for want and age.

One fine evening, as she was sitting reading her bible on the little bench shaded with honeysuckles, just before her door, who should come and sit down by her but Mrs. Betty, who had formerly been lady's maid at the great house in the village of which Mrs. Simpson's father had been minister.

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Betty, after a life of vanity, was, by a train of misfortunes, brought to this very alms-house; and though she had taken no care by frugality and prudence to avoid it, she thought it a hardship and disgrace, instead of being thankful, as she ought to have been, for such a retreat. At first she did not know Mrs. Simpson; her large cloak, bonnet, and brown stuff gown, (for she always made her appearance conform to her circumstances) being very different from the dress she had used to wear when Mrs. Betty had seen her dining at the great house; and time and sorrow had much altered her countenance. But when Mrs. Simpson kindly addressed her as an old acquaintance, she screamed with surprise—"What! you, Madam?" cried she; "You in an alms-house, living on charity; you, who used to be so charitable yourself, that you never suffered any distress in the parish which you could prevent?"—"That may be one reason, Betty," replied Mrs. Simpson, "why Providence has provided this refuge for my old age. And my heart overflows with gratitude when I look back on his goodness."—"No such great goodness, methinks," said Betty; "why you was born and bred a lady, and are now reduced to live in an alms-house."—"Betty, I was born and bred a sinner, undeserving of the mercies I have received."—"No such great mercies," said Betty. "Why I heard you had been turned out of doors; that your husband had broke; and that you had been in danger of starving, though I did not know what was become of you."—"Betty, glory be to God, it is all true."—"Well," said Betty, "you are an odd sort of a gentlewoman. If from a prosperous condition I had been made a bankrupt, a widow, and a

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beggar, I should have thought it no such mighty matter to be thankful for; but there is no accounting for taste. The neighbours used to say, that all your troubles must needs be a judgment upon you; but I, who knew how good you were, thought it very hard you should suffer so much; but now I see you reduced to an alms-house, I beg your pardon, madam, but I am afraid the neighbors were in the right, and that so many misfortunes could never have happened to you without you had committed a great many sins to deserve them; for I always thought that God is so just that he punishes us for all our bad actions and rewards us for our good ones."—"So he does, Betty, but he does it in his own way, and at his own time, and not according to our notions of good and evil; for his ways are not as our ways. God, indeed, punishes the bad and rewards the good, but he does not do it fully and finally in this world. Indeed he does not set such a value on outward things as to make riches, and rank, and beauty, and health, the rewards of piety; that would be acting like weak and erring men, and not like a just and holy God. Our belief in a future state of rewards and punishments is not always so strong as it ought to be, even now; but how totally would our faith fail if we regularly saw every thing made even in this world. So far am I from thinking that God is less just, and future happiness less certain, because I see the wicked sometimes prosper, and the righteous suffer in this world, that I am rather led to believe that God is more just and heaven more certain. For in the first place, God will not put off his favourite children with so poor a lot as the good things of this world; and next, seeing that the best men here

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below do not often attain to the best things; why it only serves to strengthen my belief, that he has most assuredly reserved for those that love him, such 'good things as an eye hath not seen nor ear heard.' God by keeping man in paradise while he was innocent, and turning him into this world as soon as had sinned, gave a plain proof that he never intended this world, even in its happiest state, as a place of reward. My father gave me good principles and useful knowledge; and while he taught me by a habit of constant employment, to be, if I may so say, independant of the world, yet he led me to a constant sense of dependance on God. As he could save little or nothing for me, he was very desirous of seeing me married to a young gentleman in the neighbourhood who expressed a regard for me. But while he was anxiously engaged in bringing this about, my good father died."

"How very unlucky!" interrupted Betty.—"No, Betty, it was very providential; this man though he maintained a decent character and lived soberly, yet he would not have made me happy."—"Why what could you want more of a man?" said Betty. "Religion," returned Mrs. Simpson. "As my father made a creditable appearance, and was very charitable, and as I was an only child, this gentleman concluded that he could give me a good fortune, for he did not know that all the poor in his parish are the children of every pious clergyman. Finding I had little or nothing left me, he withdrew his attentions."—"What a sad thing," cried Betty. "No, it was all for the best; Providence over-ruled his covetousness to my good, I could not have been happy with a man

whose soul was set on the perishable things of this world, nor did I esteem him, though I laboured to submit my own inclinations to those of my kind father. The very circumstance of my being left pennyless produced the direct contrary effect on Mr. Simpson. He was a sensible young man, engaged in a prosperous business; we had long esteemed each other, but while my father lived, he thought me above his hopes. We were married; I found him an amiable, industrious, good tempered man; he respected religion and religious people; but I had the grief to find him less pious than I had hoped. He was ambitious, and a little too much immersed in worldy schemes; and though I know it was all done for my sake, yet that did not blind me so far as to make me think it right. He attached himself so eagerly to business, that he thought every hour lost in which he was not doing something that would tend to raise me. The more prosperous he grew the less religious he became; and I began to find that one might be unhappy with a husband one tenderly loved. One day as he was standing on some steps to reach down some goods, he fell from the top and broke his leg in two places."

"What a dreadful misfortune!" said Mrs. Betty.—"What a signal blessing!" said Mrs. Simpson.—"Here I am sure I had reason to say all was for the best; from that very hour in which my outward troubles began, I date the beginning of my happiness. Severe suffering, a near prospect of death, absence from the world, silence, reflection, and above all, the divine blessing on the prayers and scriptures I read to him, were the means used by our merciful Father to turn my husband's heart

During this confinement he was awakened to a deep sense of his own sinfulness, to the vanity of all this world has to bestow, and of his great need of a Saviour. It was many months before he could leave his bed; during this time his business was neglected. His principal clerk took advantage of his absence to receive large sums of money in his name and absconded. On hearing of this great loss, our creditors came faster upon us than we could answer their demands; they grew more impatient as we were less able to satisfy them; one misfortune followed another, till at length, Mr. Simpson became a bankrupt."—"What an evil!" exclaimed Mrs. Betty. "Yet it led in the end to much good," resumed Mrs. Simpson. "We were forced to leave the town in which we had lived with so much credit and comfort, and to betake ourselves to a mean lodging in a neighbouring village, till my husband's strength should be recruited, and till we could have time to look about us to see what was to be done. The first night we got to this poor dwelling my husband felt very sorrowful, not for his own sake, but that he had brought so much poverty on me, whom he had so dearly loved; I, on the contrary was, was unusually chearful; for the blessed change in his mind had more than reconciled me to the sad change in his circumstances. I was contented to live with him in a poor cottage for a few years on earth, if it might contribute to our spending a blessed eternity together in heaven. I said to him 'instead of lamenting that we are now reduced to want all the comforts of life, I have sometimes been almost ashamed to live in the full enjoyment of them, when I have reflected that my Saviour not only chose to deny himself all these

enjoyments, but even to live a life of hardship for my sake; not one of his numerous miracles tended to his own comfort; and though we read at different times that he both hungered and thirsted, yet it was not for his own gratification that he once changed water into wine; it was for others not for himself that even the humble sustenance of barley bread was multiplied. See here, we have a bed left us, I had indeed, nothing but straw to stuff it with, but the Saviour of the world had not where to lay his head.' My husband smiled through his tears, and we sat down to supper. It consisted of a roll and a bit of cheese I had brought with me, and we eat it thankfully. After we had prayed together, we read the eleventh Chap. of the Epist. to the Hebrews. When my husband had finished it, he said, 'Surely if God's chief favourites have been martyrs, is not that a sufficient proof that this world is not a place of happiness, nor earthly prosperity the reward of virtue. Shall we, after reading this chapter, complain of our petty trials? Shall we not rather be thankful that our afflictions is so light?'

Next day Mr. Simpson walked out in search of some employment, by which we might be supported. He got a recommendation to an opulent farmer and factor who had large concerns, and wanted a skilful person to assist him in keeping his accounts. This we thought a fortunate circumstance, for we found that the salary would serve to procure us at least all the necessaries of life. The farmer was so pleased with Mr. Simpson's quickness, regularity, and good sense, that he offered us, of his own accord, a little neat cottage of his own, which then happened to be vacant, and told us we

should live rent free, and promised to be a friend to us."—"All does seem for the best now, indeed," interrupted Mrs. Betty. "We shall see," said Mrs. Simpson, and thus went on——

"I now became very easy and very happy; and was cheerfully employed in putting our few things in order, and making every thing look to the best advantage. My husband who wrote all the day for his employer, in the evenings assisted me in doing up our little garden. This was a source of much pleasure to us; we both loved a garden, and we were not only contented but cheerful. Our employer had been absent some weeks on his annual journey. He came home on a Saturday night, and the next morning sent for Mr. Simpson to come and settle his accounts, which were got behind hand by his long absence. We were just going to church, and Mr. Simpson sent back word, that he would call and speak to him on his way home. A second message followed, ordering him to come to the farmer's directly; he agreed that we should walk round that way, and that my husband should call and excuse his attendance. The farmer, more ignorant and worse educated than his plowmen, with all that pride and haughtiness which wealth without knowledge or religion is apt to give, rudely asked my husband what he meant by sending him word that he could not come to him till the next day; and insisted that he should stay and settle the accounts then. 'Sir,' said my husband, in a very respectful manner, 'I am on my road to church, and am afraid I shall be too late.'—'Are you so,' said the farmer, 'Do you know who sent for you? You may however go to church, if you will, so you make haste back; and, d'ye hear, you

may leave your accounts with me, as I conclude you have brought them with you. I will look them over by the time you return, and then you and I can do all I want to have done to day in about a couple of hours; and I will give you home some letters to copy for me in the evening.'—'Sir,' answered my husband, 'I dare not obey you; it is Sunday.'—'And so you refuse to settle my accounts only because it is Sunday.'—'Sir,' replied Mr. Simpson, 'if you would give me a handful of silver and gold I dare not break the commandment of my God.'—'Well,' said the farmer, 'but I don't order you to drive my cattle, or to work in my garden, or to do any thing which you might fancy would be a bad example.'—'Sir,' replied my husband, 'the example indeed goes a great way, but it is not the first object. The deed is wrong in itself.'—'Well, but I shall not keep you from church; and when you have been there, there is no harm in doing a little business, or taking a little pleasure, the rest of the day.'—'Sir,' answered my husband, 'the commandment does not say, thou shalt keep holy the sabbath morning but the sabbath day.'—'Get out of my house you puritanical rascal, and out of my cottage too; for if you refuse to do my work, I am not bound to keep my engagement with you, as you will not obey me as a master,'—'Sir,' said Mr. Simpson, 'I would gladly obey you, but I have a master in heaven whom I dare not disobey.'—'Then let him find employment for you,' said the enraged farmer; 'for I fancy you will get but poor employment on earth with these scrupulous notions, and so send home my papers directly, and pack off out of the parish.'—'Out of your cottage,' said my husband, 'I cer-

tainly will, but as to the parish, I hope I may remain in that if I can find employment.'—'I will make it too hot to hold you,' replied the farmer, 'so you had better troop off bag and baggage, for I am overseer, and you are sickly, it is my duty not to let any vagabonds stay in this parish who are likely to become chargeable.'

"By the time my husband returned home, for he found it too late to go to church, I had got our little dinner ready; it was a better one than we had for a long while been accustomed to see, and I was unusually chearful at this improvement in our circumstances. I saw his eyes full of tears; and Oh! with what pain did he bring himself to tell me that it was the last dinner we must ever eat in that house. I took his hand with a smile and only said, 'the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.'—'Notwithstanding this sudden stroke, (said my husband) this is still a happy country. Our employer, it is true, may turn us out at a moment's notice, because the cottage is his own, but he has no further power over us; he cannot confine or punish us. His riches it is true give him power to insult, but not to oppress us. And as to our being driven out from a cottage, how many persons of the highest rank have lately been driven out of their palaces and castles; persons born in a station which we never enjoyed, and used to all the indulgences of that rank and wealth we never knew, are at this moment wandering over the face of the earth, without a house and without bread; exiles and beggars; while we, blessed be God, are in our own native land: we have still our liberty, our limbs, the protection of just and equal laws, our churches,

our bibles, and our sabbaths.'—This happy state of my husband's mind hushed my sorrows, and I never once murmured; nay, I sat down to dinner with a degree of cheerfulness, endeavouring to cast all our care on him that careth for us. We had begged to stay till the next morning, as Sunday was not the day on which we liked to remove, but we were ordered not to sleep another night in that house; so as we had little to carry, we marched off in the evening to the poor lodging we had before occupied. The thought that my husband had cheerfully renounced his little all for conscience sake gave an unspeakable serenity to my mind, and I felt thankful, that though cast down, we were not forsaken: nay, I felt a lively gratitude to God, that while I doubted not he would accept this little sacrifice, he had graciously forborne to call us to greater trials."

"And so you were turned adrift once more? Well, ma'am, saving your presence, I hope you won't be such a fool as to say all was for the best now."—"Yes, Betty, he who does all things well, now made his kind Providence more manifest than ever. That very night, while we were sweetly sleeping in our poor lodging, the very pretty cottage out of which we were so unkindly driven, was burnt to the ground by a flash of lightning which caught the thatch, and so completely consumed the whole little building that had it not been for that merciful Providence who thus over-ruled the cruelty of the farmer for the preservation of our lives, we must have been burnt to ashes with the house. 'O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for all the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!'

"I will not tell you all the trials and troubles which befel us afterwards, because I would spare my heart the sad story of my husband's death."—"Well, that was another blessing too, I suppose," said Betty. "Oh! it was the severest trial ever sent me; I almost sunk under it at the time, and yet I now feel it to be the greatest mercy I ever experienced. He was my idol; no trouble came very near my heart while he was with me. I prayed and struggled indeed to be weaned from this world, but still my affections for him tied me down to the earth with a strong cord; and though I did try to keep my eye fixed on the eternal world, yet I viewed it at too great a distance. I had deceived myself—I fancied I bore my troubles so well from the pure love of God, but I now find that my love for my husband had too great a share in reconciling me to every trouble which I underwent for him. I lost him. The charm was broken; the cord which tied me down to the earth was cut; this world had nothing left to engage me. Heaven had now no rival in my heart. Though my love of God had always been sincere, I found there wanted this blow to make it perfect. But, though all that had made life pleasant to me was gone, I did not sink as one who had no hope. I prayed that I might even now be enabled to adore the doctrine of God and my Saviour.

"After many more hardships, I at length got an asylum in this alms house: here my cares are at an end, but not my duties. I can still read and pray with the sick. In my younger days I thought it not much to sit up late for my pleasure; and shall I now think much of sitting up now and then to watch by a dying-bed? My Saviour waked and

watched for me in the Garden, and on the Mount. It is only by keeping his sufferings before me that I can practise true self-denial."

Just as Mrs. Simpson was saying these words, a letter was brought her from the minister of the parish where the farmer lived by whom Mr. Simpson had been turned out of his cottage. The letter was as follows:

"MADAM,

"I WRITE to tell you that your old oppresser, Mr. Thomas is dead. I attended him in his last moments. O may my latter end never be like his! I shall not soon forget his despair at the approach of death. His riches which had been his sole joy, now doubled his sorrows, for he was going where they could be of no use to him; and he found too late, that he had laid up no treasure in heaven. He felt great concern at his past life, but for nothing more than his unkindness to Mr. Simpson. He charged me to find you out, and let you know, that by his will he bequeathed you five hundred pounds as some compensation. He died in great agonies, declaring with his last breath, that if he could live his life over again, he would serve God, and strictly observe the Sabbath.

"Your's, J. JOHNSON."

Mrs. Betty, who had listened attentively to the letter, jumped up, clapped her hands and cried out, "Now all is for the best, and I shall see you a lady once more."—"I am, indeed thankful for this mercy," said Mrs. Simpson, "and am glad that riches were not sent me till I had learnt, as I humbly hope, to make a right use of them. But

come let us go in, for I am very cold, and I find I have sat too long in the night air."

Betty was now ready enough to acknowledge the hand of Providence in this prosperous event, though she was blind to it when the dispensation was more dark. Next morning she went early to visit Mrs. Simpson, but not seeing her below, she went up stairs, where to her great sorrow, she found her confined to her bed by a fever, caught the night before by sitting too late on the bench reading the letter and talking it over. Betty was now more ready to cry out against Providence than ever. "What! to catch a fever while you were reading that very letter which told you about your good fortune; which would have enabled you to live like a lady as you are. I never will believe this is for the best. I did think that Providence was at last giving you your reward."—"Reward!" cried Mrs. Simpson, "O, no, my merciful Father will not put me off with so poor a portion as wealth; I feel I shall die."—"It is very hard, indeed," said Betty, "so good as you are, to be taken off just as your prosperity was beginning."——"You think I am good just now," said Mrs. Simpson, "because I am prosperous. Success is no sure mark of God's favour; at this rate, you, who judge by outward things, would have thought Herod a better man than John the Baptist; and if I may be allowed to say so, you, on your principles would have believed Pontius Pilate higher in God's favour than the Saviour whom he condemned to die for your sins and mine."

In a few days Mrs. Betty found that her new friend was dying, and though she was struck at her resignation, she could not forbear murmuring that

so good a woman should be taken off at the very time she came into possession of so much money. "Betty," said the dying woman, "do your really think that I am going to a place of rest and joy eternal?"—"To be sure I do," said Betty. "Do you firmly believe that I am going to the assembly of the first born; to the spirits of just men made perfect; to God the Judge of all; and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant?"—"I am sure you are," said Betty. "And yet," resumed the dying woman, "you would detain me from all this happiness; and you think my merciful Father is using me unkindly by removing me from a world of sin, and sorrow, and temptations, to such joys as have not entered into the heart of man to conceive; while it would have better suited your notions of reward to defer the blessedness of heaven, that I might have enjoyed a legacy of a few hundred pounds."

Mrs. Simpson expired soon after in a frame of mind which convinced her new friend, that "God's ways are not as our ways."

Z.